

Military Order



of the

Loyal Legion

of the

United States

---

COMMANDERY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

---

WAR PAPER 59.

Scouting in Tennessee.





# Military Order of the Loyal Legion

OF THE

## United States.



### COMMANDERY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.



#### WAR PAPERS.

59

### Scouting in Tennessee

PREPARED BY COMPANION

Major

**HENRY ROMEYN,**

U. S. Army,

AND

READ AT THE STATED MEETING OF NOVEMBER 1, 1905.

*2d set*

E 608

R86

TMP96-007594

## Scouting in Tennessee.

---

During the winter of 1862-3, and spring of the latter year, Ward's Brigade, as it was then known—composed of the 70th Indiana, 79th Ohio, 102d, 105th and 129th Illinois Volunteer Infantry—was encamped along the line of the Louisville and Nashville railroad with headquarters at Gallatin, Sumner county, twenty-eight miles north of Nashville. General E. A. Paine of Illinois, commanding the district of country lying along the south line of Kentucky, from the point where the Cumberland river leaves that State to where it again enters it, also had his headquarters at that place. General Crook, with a division, was at Carthage, farther up the Cumberland, and such of his supplies as were not obtainable in his vicinity were forwarded to him from Gallatin, the river being a very uncertain route, owing to liability of trouble from guerrillas, as well as from raiding parties from the organized forces of rebels at McMinnville and its vicinity. Two companies (Johnson's and Lawson's) of the 11th Kentucky Cavalry, were also at Gallatin, the only troops of that arm with the brigade.

The country swarmed with guerrillas; smugglers and underground mail carriers had regular routes across it; and scores—hundreds—of rebel soldiers, shunning further service, or stealing home to steal remounts when they arrived there, sought shelter in the hills of eastern Sumner and Macon counties, and raided the railroad at every opportunity.

The available mounted force was ridiculously small for the duty required, and, as a temporary reinforcement, General

Paine ordered a detail of one picked man from each company of the brigade for mounted duty, this number being later more than doubled, after it had demonstrated its effectiveness. Regimental commanders were directed to select a non-commissioned officer for taking charge of their details, and mounts, such as could be had from the cullings of cavalry organizations, were issued to them.

I had just returned from a forty days' sick furlough at the north, and was on the way to report to my company commander, when I was halted by the adjutant and told that the colonel wished to see me. On reporting, I was informed of the detail and asked if I would like to have charge of it. *Would I?* There was no time asked for deliberation—except to state what the colonel already knew, that I was not even a corporal—but he settled that by saying, “The General need not know that; go and report!” and, an hour later, I was in the quartermaster’s corral in town selecting horses.

We soon found that our details were not sinecures. Guarding forage trains, hunting bushwackers, smugglers, etc., kept us busy, day and night; and once for thirty-eight consecutive days the little band was in the saddle. Many of the horses became utterly exhausted, and men were only kept up by pure grit, which would not give up, while they could stand, or sit in the saddle. We were impressing horses, wherever found, but at first the quartermaster refused to accept our worn-out animals, the matter being finally settled by a remark of the General, when informed of the condition of our stock, to the effect that I was “a —— fool if I couldn’t keep my men well mounted, when I was getting fresh horses every day.”

Then the quartermaster refused to receive any branded stock. But one of the scouts was a blacksmith, and managed

to secure an impression of the Q. M.'s branding iron, made a duplicate at the regimental forge, and every captured horse was branded as soon as brought in; it was "branded horses or none" and we were soon riding horses that were second to none in Tennessee. How they were obtained will be told as the narrative proceeds.

I shall not attempt to give events in strict chronological order, as this can scarcely be classed as an historical paper, but narrate them as they come up in memory—it being immaterial whether a prisoner was captured, or a horse impressed, or train load of forage seized on the first or last day of any given week or month—possession being the main thing to be considered, chronology or sequence is of no value.

Owing to its constant activity, the little command seemed ubiquitous. Raiding a smuggler's depot on the Kentucky line one day, the succeeding one might find it on a foraging expedition in the opposite direction; with everything quiet in camp at taps, daylight of the ensuing day disclosed it making reprisals for captures of Union men, twenty miles away in the hills of Macon county, only to be back with its captives by sunset of the same day. Owing to the difficulty of rousing men sleeping in different tents, permission was obtained to take possession of a house and stables not far from camp, and the small body was gathered there and assumed a quasi separate existence, its commander reporting directly to the District Headquarters, and receiving orders from that source only.

Our duties had scarcely commenced when I was approached by the chaplain of the regiment, who stated that the adjutant had informed him that we were getting horses for army use from the surrounding country, and as one was a necessity if his duties were to be properly performed, he wished I would

obtain one for him. Not long after, in a raid over the Kentucky line, two rebel soldiers were captured at a farmhouse, and as one was wearing spurs, search was made for horses, and among a dozen or so found in a wood some distance from the house, was a beautiful piebald pony. "Here's the horse for the chaplain!" shouted the corporal as he herded the animals into the stable yard, and the pony was confiscated and taken to camp. The reverend seemed very much pleased with my "purchase" which he at once took charge of. But on our return from another expedition, a few days later, he met me with a very long, solemn face, and about the following conversation took place:

"Did you pay for the pony I have?"

"Not a bit of it, Chaplain. I gave a receipt, payable on proof of loyalty, as is done for everything we take from citizens."

"But the adjutant tells me that you seize stock wherever you find it, regardless of owner's rights or protest."

"That is true, except when the owner is well known to be a Union man; then we are very careful not to disturb him."

Desire of possession, and regard for what he considered right and honest, provoked dissension in the mind of the good man, but he finally made vicarious settlement by acting on a suggestion to turn the animal over to the quartermaster to be appraised, purchase her at the price fixed, and let the Government bear the sin; and the pony made the march to the sea, held a place in the grand review, and ended her days in peace and quiet in an Illinois town.

General Paine wasted no love on our erring brethren. Neither did he use any ambiguous language in describing

their offence, and his adjectives were pungent as well as terse, and not those commonly used in describing the future state of the good. He believed in proselyting, peaceably if practicable; if not, then his ideas were somewhat on the order of those of Mahomet—they smacked of force. His wit was very caustic. A man named Kirk, who claimed to be a major in the rebel army, but who was only a very active and pernicious guerrilla, had been captured by some of the scouts, and to insure safe keeping, confined separately from other prisoners in a jail cell. By working upon the sympathies of the officer in charge, he procured an interview with the general, and asked to be paroled.

“Paroled? No! Why, I would as soon parole the devil if I had him under lock and key.”

“But, General, I shall die if I am kept locked up.”

“Die—if you wish to. I’ll go to your funeral and make it respectable.”

Occasionally he would, on Sundays, with an escort of scouts, ride out to one of the country churches, or the house of some prominent citizen, and, as he said, “preach the gospel of loyalty to such as could be gathered to hear him.”

Soon after one such meeting, a man who had been bitter and blatant in his speech against the Government, was arrested for harboring those in arms against it; the case was proved, and he was given his choice: take the oath of allegiance, with bonds for his fidelity, or go to prison. At first he was very stubborn and chose the prison, but one night’s reflection affected a change, and he asked for another interview, and it being granted, expressed—but rather truculently—his willingness to take the oath. But it was the general’s turn to demur, and he was refused the privilege.

"But, General, you go out to the country, and preach repentance to the people, and you know the old hymn says that

"While the lamp holds out to burn  
The vilest sinner may return."

"Yes, I know it does, but your lamp is out; I put it out yesterday;"—and the refractory individual was sent north for confinement.

On another occasion, when the scouts had captured three furloughed rebels at a farm some ten or twelve miles from town, several fine turkeys, evidently tired of farm life, came into camp—riding very quietly in the blankets of the men behind their saddles. Next morning, when the general entered his room at headquarters, he was confronted by an irate female, who demanded payment for her turkeys. At first he was disposed to be patient, listening to her tale of woe; but when she became abusive toward the soldiers he broke out:—"Madam, if you had to live as my soldiers do, you would consider every turkey a godsend, and take it. We came down here to put down this rebellion which your friends got up, and we are going to do it, if it takes every —— turkey in Tennessee. Good morning! Orderly! Show this lady out!"

Three civilians—two of them natives of the state, the third a Kentuckian—were employed as secret service men, and frequently marked down the game for the scouts to capture. The Kentuckian dealt principally with smugglers and mail carriers; one of the others personated a rebel, going to or from home on furlough; and the third recruited for the rebel cause, and gathered information from all possible resources. All of them came to grief, two being killed, and the third was so badly wounded that he had to be sent north. Men living

in the country—some of them a score or more of miles away—were hired to bring information, and some of these got into trouble.

One night in February, just after midnight, I was aroused by the stable guard, who said a woman wished to see me. Turning out as quickly as possible, I met the wife of one of the men who was thus employed. A party of guerrillas had surprised him at his home and carried him off. Fleeing into the darkness, the wife had remained near enough to the scene to learn what disposition was to be made of him, and then, catching his horse, had ridden with all speed about twelve miles for help. At the picket line, on telling her story, a soldier was sent to show her the quarters of the scouts.

If the man's life were to be saved, there was no time to waste; and assuming the responsibility, the party was ordered out, the woman furnished a fresh horse, and by sunrise some half dozen of the man's rebel neighbors were in our hands as hostages for his return, which took place the next day. But his usefulness was at an end, and he, too, was sent to central Illinois for safety.

"You had better hurry; the air is blue over there," was the comment of an orderly who, with a message from the General, called me from my breakfast one morning in March. But a moment was required for saddling my horse, and in another I was racing across the fields toward the house occupied by the Commander as private quarters. In front of it stood a horse, mud-stained and tired, bearing a side-saddle. On entering the house I found the statement regarding atmospheric conditions was correct. Beside the open fire sat a young lady, whose drawn and pale face and muddy riding skirt showed excitement and long and rapid riding; while the General, pacing the floor, gave vent to language not of

a Sabbath school character, but very explosive—with adjectives better expressed by blanks and dashes than by words. My introduction was of a kind suitable to the occasion:

"Sergeant, this is Miss Fraser, daughter of Dr. Fraser of Wilson county. The — rebels arrested him last night, and say they are going to send him to Bragg for trial, for furnishing information to the Federal authorities. Here is a list of six doctors living between this place and Hartsville, or there. Arrest them, and bring them here, to be held as hostages for him. Tell them why it is done, and that his fate will be theirs. Make haste, and report at once on your return."

Hartsville was eighteen miles distant, but by noon the six individuals named were gathered at the corners of its principal streets, and the reason for their arrest explained. Half an hour later an horseman, bearing a note stating the case, was en route to McMinnville, whither Dr. Fraser had been taken, and by sunset I reported that these hostages had been placed in charge of the provost marshal. Three or four days later, the Union man presented himself at headquarters, and they were allowed to return to their homes.

At Cairo, a hamlet of eight or ten dwellings, about six miles above Gallatin on the bank of the Cumberland, the Union forces had taken possession of a sawmill, and were running it, to supply lumber for use at Gallatin. The place was a modern Sodom, and save the mother of the Ohio man in charge of the mill, I do not believe there was a decent woman in it. A fellow named Pollard, whose mother lived there, had deserted from the rebel army and had taken to bushwacking, and a special object of his malignity was the man in charge of the mill. One morning that individual presented himself at headquarters, and said that if Pollard was not captured

he must abandon the mill, for he was fired on daily from the opposite bank of the river, and that his enemy was being harbored in the place. I was ordered to get him, and taking about a dozen men was soon on the way to the place, which, lying at the foot of a steep hill, could be closely approached without discovery. Back of the crest the men were dismounted, and, screened by bushes along a fence, the search was planned, each man being assigned his place and duty, and remounting, the rush was made. With three men I broke into what had been a grocery, and in an inner room found three men seated at a card table, while on the floor lay a hand of cards, dropped when the holder ran for shelter; but a search from floor to floor failed to disclose his hiding place. In a corner of an upper room, a pile of dried beef hides, below an open scuttle to a dark attic, was climbed upon; a box, added, made a platform from which the hole could be reached, and, candle in one hand, pistol in the other, the dismal space was searched; but in vain. Some days later Captain Lawson raided the town at night, capturing Pollard, who said that like a hunted rat he had lain curled up under the hides over which I had climbed in search of him.

Failing to find the object of our hunt, a thorough search of every house was ordered, mounted men being stationed at vantage points, to prevent communication from house to house, or escape from the place. At the home of his mother, a drunken virago, armed with a club, disputed the entrance; but was outwitted by a party entering the rear door. When one of the party drew from the bed an Enfield rifle and a suit of rebel uniform, she aimed a blow at his head which, had it not been intercepted, would have made impossible the preparing of this paper, and have caused a vacancy among the sergeants of G. Co., 105th Illinois Infantry.

The uniform fitted a Frenchman of the scouts, and worn by him procured for us several good dinners, the wearer being for the time a soldier of some Louisiana regiment, escaped from a train carrying prisoners north; only to be recaptured by us about the time his meal was ready.

During the retreat of the Union forces from the State in the summer of 1862, some soldiers who had straggled from their commands, and some who had fallen behind on account of sickness, had been murdered by bushwhackers, and some of the secret service men were set at work to ferret out the guilty parties. Some had already paid the penalties of their crimes, but one named Salor was still at large and was at length located deep in the hilly country twenty-five or more miles east of the railroad. Leaving camp at nightfall, accompanied by a guide, twenty men of the scouts were in his neighborhood before daybreak; and at sunrise, in single file, and leading their horses, were climbing the rough path which led to his hiding-place—a log hut in a small clearing, out of sight of any other sign of civilization. As we mounted, a dog gave the alarm, and the bushwacker broke out of the house and started for the timber, only to be overtaken before he could reach it. Some clothing and blankets which had once belonged to Union soldiers were found in the cabin, which was one of the most squalid buildings I had ever seen, to be inhabited by human beings. In it as inmates were four females, one of whom identified one of our party, and at once proceeded to give him a "tongue-lashing" he has not yet forgotten. The prisoner was still in confinement when we left Gallatin, several months later.

During one of our incursions into Macon county, and not far from La Fayette, its county seat, we learned of the presence at his home of a Captain Haley, engaged in recruiting for the

rebel army. "But," said the informant, "you won't get him. He keeps a man at work in the field between his house and the road, and a saddled horse in the stable, and can see you coming for half a mile; and back of the house is a branch where he can hide."

He drew a rough map in the dust of the road, and by it we saw that by leaving the highway a mile from Haley's house, and keeping behind a ridge parallel to the road, we could get within rushing distance before the alarm could be given. Reaching the proper point back of the ridge, the command was halted, and a reconnaissance made on foot. That completed, a dozen men were selected, two to secure the plowman, and prevent his giving an alarm; others to go to the stable, and the branch mentioned, and four to the house. Having waited till the plowman had reached the end of his furrows at the highway, the rush was ordered. Four horses went over the low wall surrounding the yard, and in less time than it takes to tell of it, four men were inside the house. The room I entered was empty, but from across the hall I heard the command "Halt! Hands up!" followed by a woman's scream, and on entering saw a tableau.

Near the doorway Corporal Duffy stood, his revolver covering a man in the centre of the room, whose hands were extended above his head; in front of him, and facing the corporal, a slight, pale-faced woman—the wife of the Confederate officer—endeavoring to shield her husband, and exclaiming over and over, "My husband is no bushwacker!" His horse, saddled and bridled, was found in the stable, and when that was reported he said, "If I had had only one minute's warning, you would not have found me." He was sent to Johnson's Island, returned at the close of the war, and in 1897 was living in his old home.

The citizens of Hartsville, with a single exception, were strongly in favor of the Confederacy, and on almost every visit made by the scouts, some capture or captures were made. On one occasion, just at dusk of evening, we had concluded a fruitless search for some parties said to be concealed in a house at the outskirts of town, when a man was seen riding slowly through a lane leading from the pike to some fields not far away. Some one asked where he was going, when one of the leading files, who was in his saddle, leaned over far enough to bring the head of the suspect above the horizon. "It's a johnny; he's wearing a hat!" and the next instant the chase began. Mud in the lane was fetlock deep; but through it went pursued and pursuer, at top speed. He was poorly mounted, and at his heels were some of the best racing blood of the south; and by the time he had crossed a field about two hundred yards in width, he was overtaken, and ordered to surrender. He was found to be Captain McConnell, a resident of the place, on his way home on leave from McMinnville, and was of course very much chagrined over his capture. He was paroled for the night and sent back to Gallatin in the morning; taken sick there, his departure for the north was delayed for two months, during which time I saw him frequently and obtained permission for his wife to come in and take care of him. From Johnson's Island he escaped the next winter, lying on a board on the thin ice, and pulling it along by his hands; was recaptured and sent to Fort Warren, from whence he was exchanged just in time to rejoin his command and surrender with all the rest. In 1885, President Cleveland appointed him U. S. Judge for the District of Montana and the following year I met him at Helena, had a very cordial greeting, and spent a very pleasant afternoon in his company.

Among those we met at Hartsville was a lady, wife of a

staff officer of the rebel general John H. Morgan, a queenly looking, finely educated person, who, while never disguising her love for the southern cause, never forgot to be polite even to those whom she hated most. Her husband had a fine library, and after I had called upon her once she loaned me books from it, to be exchanged the next time we visited the town. On one such occasion, while pursuing some fugitives the horse of one of my men fell on the rocky bed of a stream; and when the chase was ended we returned to find a dead steed, and that the soldier, with a shattered leg, had been carried by her direction to her house, and a doctor, one of those arrested not long before, sent for to give him attention. As the party was en route farther up the river, we were forced to leave him in her care, with the assurance from her that he should not be harmed. But we had not been gone two hours, when a notorious bushwacker, whom we never succeeded in arresting, made his appearance with three or four cronies, and demanded that the Yankee be turned over to him. The plucky woman met him at the door, and while the crippled soldier, rising on his elbow on his improvised bed on her parlor floor, waited, pistol in hand, for his appearance, she explained the situation, and ordered him from the porch—enforcing her command with a pistol drawn from the folds of her dress when the bandit declined to obey. Fearing his return, she had a horse harnessed to her carriage, and the injured man placed in it, and accompanied him to the pickets at Gallatin but would not enter the Yankee lines. But when her husband was captured with his chief at Buffington's Island, a letter which told of her kindness gained for her access to Secretary Stanton, and from him a letter giving her permission to visit her husband at Camp Chase.

From the rebel lines near Tullahoma, single men and small

parties were almost daily finding their way across the Cumberland, smuggling medicines and mails on their return; and occasionally organized commands were crossed, to raid on General's Crook's line of communication. On one such raid, they dispersed a squadron of the 5th (Union) Tennessee Cavalry, and drove off two hundred beef cattle which it was driving to his camp. This indicated that the enemy had some large boat or boats concealed along the left bank of the stream, and I was ordered to take all the scouts, and search thoroughly the banks of the river and creeks, and destroy every craft which could carry a man. Beginning about six miles above the town, we patroled the river thoroughly and destroyed over fifty canoes and small flat-boats. A short distance (by road) below Hartsville, where the river was five miles or more from it, we found that a large number of horses had been landed from a flat-boat, as was indicated by the impression of its bow on the soft bank. A little above, in the left bank, was the mouth of a stream, nearly hidden by overhanging trees; and as no boat was in sight, it was supposed to be concealed there. Half a mile below, at the foot of a high bank, a canoe was to be seen, and from the shelter of bushes along the right bank men watched for hours for some man to come into view. When a negro appeared he was covered by half a dozen rifles and ordered to bring it across, and then to paddle it up stream while the command, screened from view by the timber, moved in the same direction. Halting it opposite the mouth of the creek, six volunteers—all the canoe would carry—were called for. *Every man responded.*

Taking the required number from the right of the line, the main body was ordered to deploy under cover of the brush along the bank, and, with the gunwale of the canoe not more than two inches above water, we paddled silently into the

mouth of the creek. No boat was in sight, but a hundred yards further up, behind a sharp bend we found a new flat—large enough to carry twenty-five horses and men—with sweeps and steering oar; and seated on its bow, with his back to us, was a man fishing, his rifle lying behind him. As the canoe grated against the larger craft he sprang to his feet, caught up the rifle, and, aiming at the foremost soldier, pulled the trigger, but there was no report. A motion of the hand prevented any firing on our part, two blows of an axe loosed the boat from its moorings, and while the guard fled up the steep bank the oars were manned and we were backing toward the river. As we emerged from the creek a fire from our concealed men drove back some rebels who had appeared on the bank, and a few minutes later we steered the flat to the right bank, built fires of drift wood on bow and stern, cut a hole midway of the bottom, and pushed it into the current.

Wilson county, lying along the left bank of the Cumberland, above Nashville, was not in the direct line of the Federal advance, and was a comparatively secure hiding-place for men passing both ways.

With a view of disturbing the hidden rebels, and ascertaining if enough forage could be found to justify a crossing with the train, General Paine ordered a reconnoissance by all the mounted men of three regiments—crossing at a ferry three miles from Gallatin, where a section of artillery and company of the 79th Ohio Infantry were posted to cover a retreat, if one was found necessary. As guide we had a negro who had lived in the country, and who, though well paid for his services, was—to give appearance of involuntary action on his part—tied to his saddle, and had his horse led by a soldier. We crossed as soon as possible after nightfall, and when at dawn the force reunited at a given point, we had about a

score of prisoners and more than twice as many horses and mules. At one house we found some horses in the stable, which, by passing a hand over their backs in the darkness we discovered had worn saddles the previous day; and a search of the house disclosed two men in bed—so soundly asleep that they were only awakened by being rudely shaken by their captors. From some of the negroes we learned of the presence of a rebel officer at a house a mile away and went after him. But dogs gave the alarm before we could surround the house; and he left through a rear window, leaving part of his clothing, a fine pair of English-made pistols, and a watch, in the hands of his would-be captors.

There we learned that a dance had been given the previous evening at another house in the vicinity, at which several Confederates had been guests. Day was breaking as we approached it through a wood, and a portion of the force had been dismounted, and was deploying to surround the building when again a dog gave the alarm. From his blankets, spread on the floor of a porch where with six or eight companions he had been sleeping, a man sprang up, and seeing the closing in line, shouted "Yanks!" and, "accoutré as he was" in drawers and socks, ran for the cornfield a few hundred yards away. As he fled down a lane, his long hair streaming in the wind, a mounted man took up the chase. At a square change of direction in the lane, the fugitive leaped a fence of moderate height, alighting in a dense thicket of blackberry bushes; but the horse refused, and the rider was so convulsed with laughter that he failed to fire.

With orders to allow but half their squads to eat at a time, the command was divided and sent to different houses in the immediate vicinity to feed and water horses and get breakfast. Perhaps half an hour had passed, when sharp and approaching

firing from the squad nearest the river announced a running fight; and by the time the waiting men could mount, four gray-coated ones were seen advancing at a gallop, firing on their pursuers. Caught between two fires they opened a gate leading into a piece of woods, but were all run down and captured.

Later in the day, a man with a splendid mount was captured at a shop where he was having his horse shod. The nails had not been "clinched," and pulling off a shoe, his horse fell, throwing him heavily on the hard pike. By nightfall our presence was known to all the country, and captures of men or animals were few; but forty-four hours after we left the ferry, we returned to it without having lost a man, and with twenty-seven prisoners and about seventy-five good horses and mules.

While pretending to act in the interest of the Confederacy, most of the guerrillas had no conscientious scruples against appropriating anything which struck their fancy. If taken from a Union man, he had reason for thankfulness that his life was spared; if a disloyal man lost his best horse, he ought to surrender it gracefully as a contribution to the good cause. They did not hesitate to murder if they had any personal grudge to gratify, or thought the victim had any money concealed, and some of their deeds were barbarous in the extreme. One man, eighty years old, was forced out of his bed, made to kneel in the road in front of his house, and shot, while his aged wife prayed in vain for his life. The name of the murderer was known, and was one of more than a score of whom the commander said—"I don't want to see those men," and it was some satisfaction to us, when we knew that a party had captured him; and that as far as one life could do it, he had paid the penalty of his crimes, in sight of the spot

where the old wife had pleaded in vain for the life of her husband.

Some of the wretches seemed to bear charmed lives. Jim Beasley, Ellis Harper, and one named Ramsey were sought for in vain, though we were at times so close upon them that the places where they had lain were actually warm to the touch.

In the Maxwell House in Nashville, in April, 1897, I met a man named Taylor, formerly member of Congress from Memphis, and in the course of conversation which ensued, events of war times were touched upon, and to my surprise I was told that Ellis Harper was then in the hotel, and in a moment I was facing the erstwhile bushwacker.

When told who I was, he extended a hand, and expressed pleasure at our meeting. I could not avoid a feeling of repulsion, and actually involuntarily glanced at my hand to see if there was blood on it, as he loosed his hold. He spoke freely of war times, told how near the scouts had been to capturing him on different occasions, adding "I reckon you 'uns would 'a killed me right thar," and I cheerfully assured him that his suppositions were correct. He told in the most matter-of-fact way that he "jist had ter kill" such or such an one—that he "was thar, but he didn't kill" such-and-such an one, as he had been charged with doing. And yet, this murderer, known to be such, was at the time I was hearing his tales of crime and blood, a sheriff, appointed as such by the Governor of the State, and in the city on official business!

In one of our visits to Macon county we learned of the whereabouts of one Jack Gross, who was known to have been engaged in attacks on railroad trains near Franklin, Kentucky—and determined to pay him a visit. His house stood only a few yards from a hillside, very steep, and which dropped

a hundred feet or more to a thickly wooded "bottom." Owing to a bend in the road we could not see the ground about the house, and charged it without a previous reconnoissance. As we approached it he fled by the rear door, and though slightly wounded, ran like a deer for the shelter of the bush and escaped—for the time. In searching the house we found a lot of goods secreted under the floor, and with them a keg of whiskey. The men were allowed to take as much of it as they cared for, and the remainder was ordered poured out. At this, a woman, who was found at the house, protested against the waste, and with the thought that it might loosen her tongue, was allowed to save some. It did not loosen her tongue, but it did loosen her feet, and the highland fling in which she indulged threw the original of that dance far into the shade.

Compared with the movements of large armies, and great battles of the war, these matters seem to be, and are, small. But they were minor parts in the same great drama, and fully as necessary as are some of the small parts which make up the arms of precision of to-day. They required hardihood, endurance, and courage equal to any displayed on greater fields, and after a little weeding out at first, the men left were the peers of any who fought for the Union; and I do not believe that any other body of men in the great struggle, equal in numbers and in the same length of time, could show as great results of their labors—for in about five months they turned over more than six times their number of prisoners, and nearly eight hundred horses and mules, for the Government's use. During those months but two instances of real plundering on the part of persons belonging to the detachment came to my notice. In the one case the offender not only was returned to his company, but was, by order of the colonel,

marched in front of the line at dress parade wearing a placard on his back, which described his offence. The other culprit was a lieutenant who in some manner obtained command of the scouts, but held it for only one trip, on which he took possession of two watches found while searching for mail, which articles he was peremptorily ordered to return when complaint was made.

Fortunately we had no men killed. Our attacks were always surprises, and the tactics were those favored by the rebel General Forrest—"git thar fust, with the mostest men." Narrow escapes were not lacking to add to the zest of pursuit. On one occasion when Captain Lawson's company of the 11th Kentucky Cavalry was acting with the scouts in Macon county, a desperado who probably knew that a halter was waiting for him, was thrown from his wounded horse, and the captain, first to reach him, instead of ordering "hands up" ordered him to surrender his arms. Drawing a revolver from the holster on his belt, the bandit cocked it at the same time, and, without raising it to aim, fired as he brought the weapon to the front. Half a dozen shots struck him instantly, and he died before he could fire a second time. On being asked if he were hurt the captain opened his coat and under-clothing, exposing a red welt across his chest, made by the bullet and coolly remarked, "The scoundrel meant to injure me!"

The impressment of horses and mules was often attended with exciting scenes, and the possession of the animals even after branding was often disputed. On one raid after "Jim" Beasley, at his mother's home on the Carthage pike, we found a horse with wet river mud on his fetlocks grazing in the yard, having just been used by a brother of the bushwacker when he went to the river, a mile distant, to ferry him and three

other men across. In a drawer in one of the rooms we found a photograph of the brother in rebel uniform, and consequently took him with us, and also the horse he had ridden, and a fine stallion we found in a stable. As he was a nuisance to us, he was turned over to the quartermaster, and purchased by General Ward, who rode him till the war closed, and took him to his home in Kentucky.

By some means the Beasleys found where he was and sued for his recovery, and after perjury enough had been committed to have sunk a ship—if oaths had any avoidupois—and the general had spent nearly \$3,000 defending the suit, they won, and secured the horse. The echoes of the Wilson county raid did not die away for years (they *may* still be rumbling in the Court of Claims), and ten years later, while serving in Indian Territory, I was asked to explain by what authority and for what purpose, I, on such-and-such day of May, 1863, had taken from — one roan mare, etc., etc.

My reply was that we had taken several hundreds of horses of all colors and both sexes, and could not recollect many individual animals—but that all were used for Government and if at the date mentioned he was called upon to part from only one roan mare, he was a fortunate man.

After we had been mounted for a month or six weeks, and found that one horse could not do the work required of each man and had outwitted the quartermaster, we reserved several of the best of those taken, and had half-a-dozen colored men about the stables to care for the surplus ones. I kept three, one of them a blooded mare—valued by her owner at \$1,000—and on one raid into Kentucky, which lasted five days, her saddle was not removed except to readjust the blanket, nor was my overcoat strapped to the saddle till we had reached camp on our return. When, in June, the brigade was ordered

to the front, and the scouts were dismounted, we turned in more than fifty horses from my regiment, every one "fit to run for a man's life."

We had not been of much expense to the Government. Rations—other than coffee, sugar, and salt—were seldom carried, and we never went hungry; neither did our animals. When supplied freely we gave freely in return, and I know of more than one occasion when the only coffee, or "short sweetnin," a family had tasted for months, came out of the scouts' saddle-pockets, and "Lincoln money" changed hands on several occasions when the meal had been better than usual.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 910 359 6